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COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
First session
29 March-8 April 1993
Agenda item 16

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS FIRST SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Denis A. DAVIS

Action taken by the Committee

Permanent sovereignty over mineral and water resources

(Agenda item 3)

1. At the ____ meeting, on __ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

> While reaffirming the importance of the principle of permanent sovereignty over natural resources to sustainable development, the Committee was of the view that the application of the principle in the area of mineral and water resources cannot be separated from other issues related to the sustainable development and management of water and mineral resources.
>
> The Committee therefore recommends that the issue of permanent sovereignty over mineral and water resources be no longer included in the agenda of its future sessions as a standing agenda item, but that specific aspects of this issue be brought to the attention of the Committee under other agenda items relevant to the development of mineral and water resources.

The Committee also recommends:

(a) That the Secretary-General be requested by the Economic and Social Council to update the content of section II (Water and the exercise of permanent sovereignty) of his report on permanent sovereignty over mineral and water resources and, in so doing:

(i) To devote special attention to issues related to shared water resources;

(ii) To take into account comments made by the members of the Committee on this issue, as well as comments provided by Member States and relevant non-governmental organizations, such as the International Law Association, on the draft articles on the law of the non-navigational uses of international watercourses, prepared by the International Law Commission;

(iii) To include in the report an analysis of trends in recent negotiations and agreements related to shared water resources and to identify barriers to the implementation of existing agreements;

(b) That the Secretary-General be requested by the Economic and Social Council to prepare for the forthcoming session of the Committee a report containing a review of the mining legislation of selected countries (developed and developing countries as well as economies in transition) and, in so doing, to focus, in particular, on licensing procedures, contractual provisions and other related issues. The report should take advantage of available existing data collected by other regional and inter-regional organizations and entities. It should include a review of technical cooperation activities carried out by the United Nations in the field of mining legislation.

Action taken by the Committee

B. New techniques, including remote sensing, for identifying, exploring for and assessing mineral and water resources

(Agenda item 4)

2. At the ____ meeting, on __ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

The Committee on Natural Resources wishes to emphasize that new techniques such as remote sensing by satellite, play a complementary role in identifying, exploring for, developing and managing mineral and water resources. The Committee is of the view that remote sensing, with its capabilities of synoptic view, near real time data availability and improved spatial resolution will be of paramount importance for monitoring and understanding the global hydrologic cycle. Such information has immediate application to integrated land and water management, and longer-term application to the detection of the potential impacts of climate change.

The Committee notes that the application of new technologies and their most effective combination, including airborne and satellite technologies, should be based on an evaluation of the needs and the nature of the problems or data gaps.

The Committee considers that, when addressing the subject of remote sensing in its future work, it should focus, in particular, on the possibilities for the establishment of national or, as appropriate, local natural resources management systems to address issues related to space technology applications in the mining and water resources sectors.

The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested by the Economic and Social Council to prepare, for the second session of the Committee, a note containing information on existing internationally agreed principles, rules and regulations governing the relationship between the owner of data collected through remote-sensing techniques and the country to which such data are related, as well as information on the present state of activities on this issue within the United Nations system.

The Committee entrusts its Chairman to officially transmit to the Secretary-General, for consideration by the relevant Secretariat entity and possible further action, a list of technical comments, observations and suggestions made during the discussion on this issue.

Action taken by the Committee

C. Disaster prevention and mitigation in developing and utilizing mineral and water resources

(Agenda item 5)

3. At the ____ meeting, on __ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

The Committee stresses the importance of effective and coordinated implementation of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and of the need for all countries to adopt pro-active strategies in the field of water- and mining-related disasters; to that end the establishment of national or, as appropriate, local committees to coordinate activities should be strongly encouraged.

The Committee recommends, in particular, that the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, in dealing with natural or man-made disasters related to water and mineral resources, such as flooding, drought-driven famine, massive pollution, dam failures, soil degradation or salinization, mine explosion or caving, or land subsidence, devote priority attention to the development of strategies and programmes that integrate water and land issues.

The Committee recommends that the United Nations Secretariat be requested to prepare and publish a study on non-structural measures taken by various Governments for the prevention of disasters related to water and mineral resources.

The Committee invites the Intersecretariat Group on Water Resources to pay particular attention to the close interrelationship between the prevention and mitigation of water-related disasters and the sustainable development and management of water resources and ecosystems.

The Committee entrusts its Chairman to officially transmit to the Secretary-General, for consideration by the relevant Secretariat entity and possible further action, a list of technical comments, observations and suggestions made during the discussion on this issue.

Action taken by the Committee

D. Activities in the United Nations system in the field of water resources

(Agenda item 6)

4. At the ____ meeting, on __ April 1993, the Chairman of the Committee made the following statement on behalf of the Committee:

In order to come to grips with the increasing threats to human living conditions from water-related problems, inter-agency cooperation needs to be further intensified; therefore, barriers due to different perceptions of water issues by the various agencies should be minimized.

Water is a renewable but finite resource; it has to serve the total needs of all natural ecosystems, as well as the needs of human society - particularly in the context of the fight against poverty.

The crucial importance of the role and functions of the water cycle should be fully acknowledged.

Conservation of water resources is among the highest priorities. It is, moreover, necessary to avoid an exclusively anthropocentric approach in the consideration of water management issues.

The United Nations system should adopt and implement a holistic, integrated and balanced approach to water-related issues, taking into account both their economic and social implications and their impact on ecosystems.

The Committee recommends that organs and organizations of the United Nations system be encouraged by the Economic and Social Council to adopt and implement more coherent perceptions of water-related issues and to address the cognitive problems involved through effective intersectoral, interprofessional and interdisciplinary cooperation and effective joint programming in the area of water resources.

The Committee notes the important role of the Commission on Sustainable Development in monitoring progress in the overall implementation of Agenda 21 and in recommending future courses of action.

With regard to its own role and future coordination of United Nations activities in the field of water resources in the context of sustainable development, the Committee wishes to bring the following points to the attention of the Economic and Social Council:

(a) The Committee on Natural Resources is the appropriate committee to provide expertise and advice in the consideration of the parts of Agenda 21 and other policy documents related to water and mineral resources;

(b) The Committee considers that the closely interrelated water and land issues are inseparable components of sustainable development;

(c) The Committee acknowledges and supports the important role of the ACC Intersecretariat Group for Water Resources in the exchange of information and the substantive coordination of programmes aimed at the sustainable development of water resources.

The Committee also recommends that organs and organizations of the United Nations system be invited by the Economic and Social Council to further enhance their cooperation with regional and interregional organizations that do not belong to the United Nations system, as well as with relevant non-governmental organizations. In this respect, the Committee notes with appreciation the work of the Collaborative Council for Water Supply and Sanitation and its commitment to the strengthening of such cooperation.

The Committee considers that the role of women in the provision, management and safeguarding of water resources should be addressed as a high priority in inter-agency coordination and joint programming of activities within the United Nations system.

The Committee recommends that "Social participation in the sustainable development and management of water resources" be chosen as the theme for the observance of World Water Day, in 1994.